

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2683

S E C R E T MANAMA 1455

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MARR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE STATUS

SUMMARY - GOB WANTS US TO ACKNOWLEDGE ITS AUGUST LETTER  
INDICATING MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE TO BE TERMINATED BY  
MID-1977. SUGGESTED TEXT BELOW.

1. WHEN I MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER DECEMBER 29 ON OTHER  
BUSINESS, THE QUESTION OF THE BALANCE OF THE AGREED \$4  
MILLION RENT FOR U.S. NAVY FACILITIES IN FY 75 AND 76 ONCE  
AGAIN CAME UP. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID WHILE GOB WOULD LIKE  
TO CLEAR THE BOOKS ON THE OVERDUE RENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE,  
IT IS NOT REALLY "CONCERNED ABOUT THE MONEY" SINCE IT IS  
CONFIDENT THERE IS NO FURTHER LEGAL/BUDGETARY HANG UP IN  
OUR MAKING PAYMENT.

2. FOREIGN MINISTER CONTINUED THAT WHAT CONCERNS GOB IS  
OUR DELAY IN ACKNOWLEDGING FORMALLY ITS AUGUST LETTER  
INDICATING GOB DECISION THAT STATIONING AGREEMENT BE TERMINATED  
AND MIDEAST FORCE PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN WITHDRAWN BY MID-1977.  
FOREIGN MINISTER STRESSED THAT LETTER HAD BEEN DELIVERED  
NOT IN ATMOSPHERE OF HOSTILITY BUT IN HOPE THAT NAVY'S WITH-  
DRAWAL WOULD MARK THE END OF THE "LAST VESTIGE OF THE COLONIAL  
PAST" AND ADVENT OF A MORE APPROPRIATE, STRONGER U.S.  
PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN, FOCUSED ON DIPLOMATIC/COMMERCIAL/TECHNICAL  
AND CULTURAL TIES. GOB HOPED THIS TRANSITION WOULD SEE  
STRENGTHENING OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS BUT OUR "IGNORING"

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GOB AUGUST LETTER WAS NOT HELPFUL IN THIS REGARD.

3. I COUNTERED WITH "HIGH LEVEL REVIEW" PLEA, NOTING THE GOB'S DECISION HAD NOT BEEN HELPFUL TO U.S. AND HAD RAISED SOME SERIOUS AND COMPLICATED OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS FOR U.S. NAVY. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID GOB OBVIOUSLY AWARE OF PROBLEMS LEAVING BAHRAIN WOULD CAUSE U.S. NAVY AND FOR THAT REASON HAD GIVEN US "TWO YEAR NOTICE". GOB IS NOT ASKING WHAT WE PLAN TO DO WITH MIDEASTFOR AFTER MID-1977, IT IS SIMPLY ASKING THAT WE FORMALLY ACKNOWLEDGE ITS DECISION THAT THE NAVY WILL LEAVE BAHRAIN BY THAT DATE. ON THIS LIMITED POINT, FOREIGN MINISTER PROFESSED TO BE UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS WE ARE REVIEWING IN WASHINGTON. REFERRING TO HIS NEW YORK DISCUSSION WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY AHERTON AND THE AGREED TEXT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S SEPTEMBER 30 PRESS GUIDANCE, FOREIGN MINISTER SAID AS FAR AS GOB IS CONCERNED THIS IS A CLOSED CASE EXCEPT FOR NEED FOR USG TO EXTEND THE COURTESY OF A REPLY TO GOB'S AUGUST LETTER.

4. I TOLD FOREIGN MINISTER THERE IS SCHOOL OF THOUGHT THAT MAINTAINS GOB LETTER NEEDS NO RESPONSE. IF STATIONING AGREEMENT IS TO BE TERMINATED BY MID-1977 IT IS PREMATURE TO SERVE FORMAL NOTICE UNTIL JUNE 1976 (IF WE SERVE) OR DECEMBER 1976 (IF GOB SERVES). FOREIGN MINISTER SAID A REPLY MERELY POINTING THIS OUT WOULD AT LEAST "SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT" AND REMOVE THE IMPLICATION THAT USG IS SOMEHOW TRYING TO IGNORE FORMAL NOTICE OF A SERIOUS GOB POLICY DECISION TAKEN IN A SPIRIT OF BILATERAL FRIENDSHIP.

5. COMMENT: AS DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL GOB HAS ALREADY REBUTTED ARGUMENT THAT BY ACKNOWLEDGING ITS AUGUST NOTICE WE ARE LOCKING OURSELVES IN - FIRST OF ALL, IT WANTS US LOCKED IN; SECONDLY, IT CLAIMS IT WOULD HAVE NO DIFFICULTIES REVERSING ITS DECISION RE MID-1977 IF "THE AREA SITUATION CHANGED" (I.E. IF IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA PUBLICALLY URGED BAHRAIN'S RETENTION OF MIDEASTFORCE). HENCE I AM PERSUADED FURTHER DELAY IN ACKNOWLEDGING AUGUST NOTE WILL ONLY STRAIN RELATIONS AND FURTHER WEAKEN THE ALREADY DIM PROSPECTS FOR A REVERSAL OF GOB'S DECISION. IN ADDITION SINCE IT IS NOW NEARLY FIVE MONTHS SINCE WE GOT GOB LETTER AND THREE MONTHS SINCE OUR PRESS GUIDANCE WAS POSTED, IDEAS OF A  
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"JOINT STATEMENT" ON TERMINATING NAVY PRESENCE WOULD APPEAR LONG OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS.

6. RECOMMENDATION: I THINK WE SHOULD REPLY TO GOB ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: QUOTE: USG HAS REVIEWED GOB'S DECISION, EXPRESSED IN FOREIGN MINISTER'S AUGUST 12, 1975 LETTER TO AMBASSADOR, TO "RELINQUISH AND EVENTUALLY DISCONTINUE PRESENCE OF U.S. NAVY'S MIDDLE EAST FORCE IN BAHRAIN ON AND

AFTER JUNE 30, 1977". AS GOB IS AWARE THE U.S. NAVY'S PRESENCE IN BAHRAIN IS PROVIDED FOR IN AN AGREEMENT OF DECEMBER 23, 1971 WHICH STIPULATES THE MANNER IN WHICH EITHER GOVERNMENT MIGHT TERMINATE THE ARRANGEMENT. IN VIEW OF THE DECISION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN THE USG CONSIDERS IT PREMATURE AT THIS TIME TO TAKE STEPS TO TERMINATE THE AGREEMENT. UNQUOTE. WE WOULD SUGGEST NOT DISCUSSING TEXT OF SUCH A RESPONSE WITH GOB UNTIL WE HAVE FORMALLY DELIVERED IT, SINCE IT IS SUBSTANTIVELY LESS THAT FOREIGN MINISTER WANTS BUT IN OUR VIEW ALL WE NEED TELL HIM.

7. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS THIS MESSAGE TO SECDEF, CNO, CINCUSNAVEUR AND COMIDEASTFOR.  
TWINAM

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NNN

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